

Azores
Action Plan

fostering awareness and proximity

Project**Islands of Innovation****Partner organisation****Regional Assistant Secretary of the Presidency for External Relations**

Regional Directorate for European Affairs

Azores Regional Government

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I. Azores in the “Islands of Innovation” Project

At the time when the application to Interreg Europe was prepared, the participation of the Azores in this project was planned¹ along the following lines:

Regarding the way in which the project will contribute to improve or develop the policy instrument (supporting new projects or structural changes in governance):

This project, through its learning sessions, good practices and drafting of an action plan, in a jointly manner with the stakeholders, aims to improve the awareness of the regional players within the innovation market that their products and services will be more successful with the introduction of innovative practices.

Regarding the needs for improvement in the territorial situation:

This project, through the structured dialogue with the stakeholders and the connection between producers, service providers and enterprises, not only on a regional level but also between the other regions/islands of the project, constitutes an opportunity and an advantage when it comes to changing the perception of the real value behind both innovation and the improvement of the *modus operandi* and practices used in the production and distribution of goods and services.

¹ See application form, pages 20 and 21

II. Implementation of the Project

“Islands of Innovation” began in 2017 with the clear understanding that the Azores was ongoing a phase of strategical structuring in the area of innovation, namely through the creation of infrastructures, through the creation of the Regional Council for Innovation, through the process of revising its Smart Specialization Strategy (RIS3), among others.

Getting the project off the ground entailed, for its implementation, the establishment of a strategic partnership between the Regional Directorate for European Affairs (DRAE), the Regional Directorate for Science and Technology (DRCT) and the Regional Fund for Science and Technology (FRCT).

Since 2017, the project’s team has held and/or participated in:

- **Six Regional Stakeholder Meetings**
- **Six Learning Sessions** in Samsø, Madeira, Frisia, Azores (November/2018 and October/2019) and Saaremaa, in which regional stakeholders actively participated (FRCT, University of the Azores and NONAGON)

In the regional stakeholders meeting of 20 September 2017, the “TIPPING Wheel” tool was applied to the reality of the Azores, based on the three RIS3 areas of the Azores (Agriculture, Livestock and Agribusiness; Fisheries and Sea; Tourism), with the help of facilitators (Ricardo Machado of NONAGON, Telmo Eleutério of FIBRENAMICS and Sandra Faria of the AZORES UNIVERSITY).

With the contribution of all the project’s partners, a **comparative report** was drafted regarding the status of innovation in the various regions.

In order to prepare the contribution of the Azores for the drafting of this report, a **list of ongoing projects in the Azores** (with or without EU funding) **was drawn up**, as a basis for the assessment of the region’s status of innovation.

Furthermore, several **examples of good practices in the Azores** have been added to the “Manual of the TIPPING Wheel”.

A youth survey was conducted in the 9 islands of the Azores archipelago with the help of an interdisciplinary team which was put together for this purpose – besides DRAE and FRCT, this team was composed by the Regional Directorate for Employment and Vocational Training, the Employment Observatory, the Regional Directorate for Education, The Regional Directorate for the Support of Investment and Competitiveness, the Regional Directorate for Youth and the Azores University.

The preliminary survey results were presented during a regional stakeholders meeting (28 June 2019) and in a public session on “Youth – Innovation and Entrepreneurship”, organised during the project's 6th Learning Session, in Terceira, Azores, on 25 October 2019. Following the debate held during this session, the University of the Azores was invited to carry a more in-depth analysis of these results that should be disclosed shortly.

Still within the Island of Innovation's scope, the project's team took part in several **workshops, seminars and other events in the Azores**, on the topic of Innovation.

Furthermore, this Action Plan has been developed and discussed with a core group of regional stakeholders.

III. Assessment of the regional environment for Innovation

Currently, after roughly three years of implementing this project, it is possible to summarize the following regarding the regional environment/ecosystem for innovation:

Policy instruments directed towards innovation

- ▶ At the regional level, there are two policy instruments directly aimed towards innovation; on one hand, in terms of planning, the **Regional Smart Specialization Strategy, RIS3 – Azores**, and, on the other hand, on the operational level, the **Regional Agenda for Innovation** (now nearing completion).
- ▶ As means of supporting the implementation of these instruments, there are **several financial support mechanisms specifically directed towards innovation**, including the creation and transfer of knowledge, entrepreneurship and incentives to companies and to economic activities. Most of these mechanisms are incorporated within the framework of the Azores Operational Programme 2020 (ERDF and ESF), highlighting: the COMPETIR+ system of incentives, Vale Incubação (“Incubation Voucher”) and dedicated funds such as “Business Angels” and “Mentoring”.
- ▶ In combination with the specific innovation policy instruments, at a regional level we can highlight the policy of Science and Technology, framed within the **system of financial incentives, Pro-Scientia**, which follows the implementation of 4 priority axis: add value, cooperate, qualify and update the Scientific and Technological System of the Azores. With regard to this system, one must emphasise the programmes for the transfer of knowledge and innovation to the companies, such as: the **“Transfer +”** initiative, which aims to foster a better connection between scientific production, innovation and economy; the incentive to the create clusters of R&D within companies; the **incentives to the internationalization of R&D** and the **advanced training programmes** which include PhD scholarships, postdoctoral scholarships, and the framing of these scholarships within the business

context. In support of the innovation process, the funding of initiatives and projects which aim to disseminate the scientific and technological culture, projects of citizen science, and projects of experimental science must also be highlighted.

- ▶ **Employment policy** is also one of the governance fields which support regional innovation. In this setting, a specific reference to the regional initiatives of integration in the job market, such as the employability programmes, e.g. “Estagiar L”, for people with a bachelor degree, and “Estagiar T”, for professional activities.
- ▶ Similarly, there are **initiatives, which are fostered by public entities, which aim to boost innovation and entrepreneurship**, such as the Regional Entrepreneurship Competition, the ETH (Entrepreneurship Triple Helix) project, or the “Use&Abuse” competition.
- ▶ Moreover, the **Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialization, known as RIS3 Azores**, in force from 2014 to 2020, is now being evaluated in order to allow for its revision, thus ensuring its adequacy for the next EU programming period 2021-2027.

Notion of liaison and holistic perspective

- ▶ There is an innovation strategy in place for the various sectors, which is transversal to the **Regional Government’s Programme**, and which is associated to a global vision of sustainability of the archipelago.
- ▶ This liaison has led to the decision of adopting a **multilevel governance structure for RIS3 Azores**, based on the principle of representative participation of the key actors in the regional innovation ecosystem, i.e. research centres, companies, public administration and the society as a whole.
- ▶ The preparation and implementation of the **“Agenda of the Azores for Innovation”** is currently undergoing – this is an aggregating and extensive tool when it comes to its participation and its reach.

- ▶ The alignment of the Azores Operational Programme 2020 with RIS3 demonstrates the importance of a both strategic and coherent thinking when it comes to projects which are applying for funding, namely to EU funds.

▶ Creation of knowledge

- ▶ The creation of knowledge is transversal to all of the entities participating in the **Azores Scientific and Technological System (SCTA)**.
- ▶ The Region has a **University**, divided in 3 campuses located in 3 different islands, in which there are research centres for various fields of knowledge, including but not limited to, Biodiversity, Marine Sciences, Geology, Regional Economy, Social Sciences and Humanities.

The University can be considered as quite active in terms of creation of knowledge (training provided) and in research (several *spin-offs* with companies have been identified).

Albeit recognizing the difficulty of offering courses according to needs of society, there is higher education available in the RIS3 areas.

The University is particularly aware of the importance of innovation and the transfer of knowledge, evidenced by the following:

- the creation of the Associate's Dean Office for innovation and entrepreneurship;
 - the business incubator project in the University, in launch phase;
 - the existence of several areas of research and teaching which are capable of creating knowledge;
- ▶ There are **other entities** in the Region **which generate knowledge**, such as INOVA, ENTA and several other vocational training schools, that are active partners in the development of projects.

- ▶ There are also several projects from **non-profit organizations**, some of them in combination with public entities, which foster knowledge, innovation, entrepreneurship and other transversal areas such as the circular economy – a few examples of these organizations are Cresaçor, ACEESA and Norte Crescente.

➤ Infrastructures dedicated to science/research

- ▶ The **creation of Science and Technology Parks** in the Region is, most likely, the best example of dedicated infrastructures:

NONAGON, which is fully operational, shows a high level of proactivity and integration within society. There are currently several successful incubated companies operating from its facilities. Furthermore, NONAGON is also a facilitator of many actions with the community (*open tech days; start-up weekend; seminars, Coder Dojo*).

Recently, **TERINOV** was created in Terceira island. This will enable a similar dynamic as the one mentioned above, but in another island of the archipelago.

- ▶ In the Azores, there are also other business incubators, and an **incubator network** (RIEA).

➤ Increasing the value of endogenous products

- ▶ One of the key objectives of this project is to use innovation as a leverage to increase the value of endogenous products, having been identified projects which were approved under Azores OP 2020, axis 1.2, which aims to **increase the value of endogenous products through other applications or new specificities** (e.g. pineapple composite, usage of fibres from *Hedychium gardnerianum*, hydrangea and basalt, or waste wood composite).
- ▶ The regional media has reported about several **projects and new and innovating products**, with or without public funding (regional, national or European), such as

algae and microorganisms, tea properties or cheese produced with ferruginous waters from the local springs.

- ▶ It is possible to identify an exponential growth in projects related with the **protection of the environment, sustainability and circular economy** (such as “Quinta do Bom Despacho”).
- ▶ It is also possible to identify projects with a large **innovation** component in the **social area** (“Azores for All”, CRESAÇOR, for example).
- ▶ This innovation is not unrelated to the increase in the **tourism flows** in the Region:
 - Aware of the concerns related to an alleged increase in the environmental pressure, or of a decrease in the number of available rental housing, there is the recognition of a wider **cultural diversity**, where new people, new ideas and especially a different **propensity for Azorean products** linked with Nature, may boost the internal consumption of local products, thus potentially reducing the costs associated with making the product available outside the regional market.
 - This increase in the tourism flows may also boost the **creation of new products** in response to the demand of those who visit the Region (merchandising, handicraft, diversification and experimentation in the Azorean gastronomy).
 - Innovation is also visible in the growth and diversity of **cultural events**, which take in consideration the intrinsic characteristics of the Region (“Tremor” and “Walk & Talk” festivals), favouring Nature and sustainability, using non-conventional venues, offering creative opportunities to the population and fostering the community’s creativity.
 - It is also worth to mention the development opportunities for a **tourism associated with traditional productions**, having been identified housing projects next to pineapple greenhouses or in areas where tea is produced, maximizing income through new ways of exploring these traditional products, even if indirectly.

IV. Contributions of the learning sessions and good practices

While recognizing the add value of the learning sessions, the contact to innovative projects, different reality's and best practices presented by project partners, this Action Plan objectively assumes the following influences:

Samsø

- ▶ Its history with the community is inspiring, as well as the way that they were capable to change their economic and environmental model, transitioning to sustainable energy through a *bottom/up* approach, where the community was involved and convinced through the presentation of the advantages tied to this change (*win/win*).
- ▶ The creation, alongside the "Energy Academy", of a scientific community that makes available venues and fosters projects allowing share ideas/reflect, has attracted to the island researchers and scholars from all over the world, which have, undoubtedly, both touched the local community and taken some impressions home themselves.
- ▶ The good practice "[Viking Circle](#)", inspired by and adapted from the "[Circle Way](#)" theory, although intended for informal encounters, is based on a circular logic (of equality, of there being no beginning nor end and that the idea being discussed is at the centre of the circle) which may be considered in the drafting and implementation of the project's Action Plan.

Friesland

- ▶ In a region where the levels of research and innovation are amongst the highest in Europe, one can clearly notice an "innovation culture", transversal to society.
- ▶ Despite this different state in comparison with the other regions of the project, there are also concerns regarding biodiversity and Nature.
- ▶ There are some examples which can be reproduced in other regions, like the Azores:
 - Use cultural, musical and other type of festivals as venues in which to test

new and innovative concepts and products, especially those related to the circular economy.

The venue of the festival works as a “living laboratory” where those who are interested can test their products and ideas in real time, by making them available to the people attending the festival; this way, they are not only marketing their products and services, but also testing how they are accepted by potential customers, and possibly adapting them according to any suggestions received.

This concept is applied in the “Into the Great Wide Open” (IGWO) festival, in partnership with [Lab Vlieland](#) (a good practice identified by Friesland) and the [INNOFEST](#) festival.

The “[Kunstmaand Ameland](#)” (a good practice identified by Friesland) uses non-conventional public spaces throughout the city as art galleries. This idea could be put in place to disseminate information/projects/“teasers” on innovation, using non-conventional spaces which benefit from high exposure and movement of people.

The TIPPING Wheel (TW)

- ▶ The introduction of the TIPPING Wheel instrument in the project has proved to be key for the Azores. It has decisively influenced the analysis of the Region's “state of innovation”, while proving to be an instrument that entails other advantages in itself: the methodology of its application fosters discussion, sharing and reflection within the group, generating immediate effects. This is the reason, given the success of its application in the Azores (a pioneer in its application as recognised in the “TW Manual”), that a further and in depth use of the TW instrument is considered in the Azores Action Plan.

V. Assumptions and preliminary conclusions

- The Azores are part of a dynamic of innovation, which, in turn, is part of a global innovation strategy.
- There are several good examples of this dynamic, and its potential to leverage regional products through innovation is notable. There are actions and views which have been identified that may contribute to a wider spread of an “innovation culture” in the Azores.
- Although the project has identified a larger number of innovative projects and ideas in the islands of S. Miguel and Terceira, one cannot ignore the other 7 islands, which, on their own scale, also foster their own products and services through innovative methods. It is acknowledged that the project has, in its initial stage, concentrated its main activities in these two islands and should, therefore, also focus on developing and fostering good practices in the other islands during its further implementation.
- The archipelagic condition may hinder the flow of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas, which are still quite associated with physical presence and immediate contact.
- Since the first regional stakeholders meeting, the project’s team has decided to widen the participation to other entities and individuals, besides those who were formally foreseen in the application to this project. There has been a widespread participation and interest in the dynamics of this project.
- This practice, which had its subsequent meetings broadened in terms of number and areas of intervention, has come to fill the gap of insufficient opportunities to meet and to share interests and news at a technical level.
- The creation of venues and moments during the project activities had a very positive return from the participants when it comes to establishing bilateral and multilateral relations.
- There is the belief that, in the future, one should strengthen the engagement by other entities and individuals, specifically by companies and the civil society.
- Some difficulties can be acknowledged when it comes to identifying and listing all of the ongoing projects (or ideas of projects) connected to innovation, this would be essential

to render an overall image of the state of the art of innovation in the Azores.

- The focus and the work carried out by each institution in their own projects means that, understandably so, they lack the availability for a collective and broader vision, which, in turn, means that often the “innovation agents” are not aware of initiatives being developed in parallel, and with which mutually beneficial synergies could be established.
- The initiatives on innovation, in which the project’s team took part, and which were fostered by various entities, did not have a high number of participants and those that do participate are, normally, the same. Notwithstanding any other factors that could have motivated this reality, it would perhaps be possible to overcome this situation by improving and diversifying the means of dissemination used for these events.
- A greater exposure of the projects and initiatives to the society, as well as their results and potential applications, could leverage research and its connection with companies.
- This exposure could help to bring attention to the Region about its ongoing dynamics, projects and researches, which, in turn, could then help attracting foreign entrepreneur, investors and researchers to the Region.

VI. Improvements to the Azores Innovation Ecosystem

Globally, as a result of the project's conclusions, it is believed that the introduction of the following improvements would be advantageous to improve the Azorean Innovation Ecosystem:

Creating a meeting point

Where all of the stakeholders from the quadruple helix (public institutions, business sector, knowledge sector and civil society) could have access (getting to know and inspiring) to the activities/projects and information made available by each participant/stakeholder, thus fostering the creation of synergies

Disseminating information

Disseminating topics, projects, support systems, events, and others, in the field of innovation, so that it is possible to reach new audiences, constitute new partnerships and value the work of everyone and of the Region

Reducing disparities in the access to information

By ensuring that information dissemination reaches other islands of the archipelago with different levels of development and access to information, it may increase the likelihood of awareness of the innovative role in creating add value to traditional products.

VII. Actions

Policy Context

The Action Plan aims to impact: Other regional development policy instrument

Islands of Innovation has been committed to influence the Azores 2020 Operational Programme (ERDF, ESF). Moreover, as stated in the application form, the project also focuses on improving the Azores Smart Specialization Strategy (RIS3 Azores), considering this strategy is fundamentally linked to Azores 2020 OP.

To these two instruments, others were deemed to be considered and so added during the implementation of the project, namely, the Regional Agenda for Innovation (now nearing completion), to which the project was called to contribute.

As all the Operational Programmes in Europe, the Azores 2020 Operational Programme (ERDF, ESF) enters the final stage of its implementation in the context of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020. Thus, given the governance mechanisms (involving regional, national and European authorities), no formal modification of this programme is envisaged in this Action Plan.

However, during the implementation of the project, Islands of Innovation has been involved and contributed to the implementation of this Operational Program, namely through the participation in the OP Monitoring Committee.

Furthermore, the Smart Specialization Strategy of the Azores is also undergoing a revision process, thus adapting it to the next MMF, a process in which Islands of Innovation has been an active participant.

This Action Plan was drafted taking into consideration – much as a result of the diagnostic of the regional environment – that the most relevant and needed improvements are not in the content nor in the governance of two mentioned policy instruments in themselves.

Given, on the one hand, its near “expiration date” and mostly, on the other hand, the perception, shared by the project stakeholders, that they both broadly respond to the needs of the Azores, the actions foreseen aim at impacting the environment in which these instruments operate (see Actions 2, 3 and 4), namely by creating tools of consolidation and dissemination of information and promoting forums that boost open discussions.

In addition, Islands of Innovation is actively working to influence – namely via Action 1 - the policy instruments that will succeed the current Operational Programme and Smart Specialization Strategy.

Action 1 – Present and discuss, with the relevant regional authorities, the proposals for improvement

Background

The dissemination of the project results has been a regular task during all project phases. Notwithstanding the impacts this project has fostered on the definition of the policy instrument, namely through its participation in institutional bodies (Azores OP Monitoring Committee; Revision process of the RIS3 Azores; Regional Innovation Council; amongst others), a formal presentation and discussion, to and with the relevant regional authorities in charge of the implementation of the project-related policy instruments (OP Azores and RIS3 Azores), of a number of improvement proposals, identified by the project, is considered necessary. This action will have an added value to the policy makers, and to the community at large, while clearly emphasises the contribution of regional stakeholders throughout this project.

Action

Formal delivery of a document containing the improvement proposals that should be taken into account in the preparation of the next Operational Programme (2021-2027 and in the revision of the RIS3 Azores for this programming period.), as grounds for engaging further discussions and creating accountability for the follow-up of the project.

Players involved

Regional Directorate for European Affairs, with the contribution and validation of the regional stakeholders.

Objectives

- Introduce improvements in the policy instrument governance of the Azores 2020 OP
- Contribute to the review process of the Smart Specialization Strategy (RIS3 Azores)

- Formalize the delivery to policy makers of improvement contributions collected from the actions outlined in phase 2 (particularly Actions 2 and 4)
- Increase public authorities' awareness of the added value of interregional cooperation projects

Timeframe

Drafting and discussing the document and improvement proposals with regional stakeholders: 1st semester of 2020

Delivery and discussion of the document with the relevant regional authorities: 2nd Semester of 2020

Costs

Not applicable

Funding source

Not applicable

Action 2 - Innovation Roadshow/Application of the *TIPPING Wheel*

Background

After having identified that the main improvements to introduce in the policy instruments would be the creation of meeting points between the key players of the regional innovation ecosystem, reducing asymmetries in the access to information between the islands and boosting the general dissemination of information, this action intends to contribute to the implementation of these improvements.

The use, in the Azores, of methodologic instrument *TIPPING Wheel* has been in the core of this project. It has decisively influenced the analysis of the Region's "state of innovation", while entailing other advantages in itself: its application fosters discussion, exchanges and critical reflection within the targeted groups.

In this framework, given the positive results of its application in the Azores (as recognised in the "*TIPPING Wheel* Manual"), we wish to further and in-depth develop the use of the *TIPPING Wheel* instrument, grounded by the circular concept identified in the Good Practice of the Samsø Partner, the Viking Circle.

Thus, this action intends to contribute to a shift from a pyramidal vision of the ecosystem, that often has the misconception that public authorities are in charge of leading the processes and that the other actors of the quadruple helix just need to follow.

A circular concept with a logic of parity and that the idea being discussed is at the centre of the circle, a concept that was introduced in the discussion sessions of the application of the *TIPPING Wheel* in the islands, as a result of Samsø's reality, experienced in the learning session, contributed to the drafting of this measure.

Action

Creation of a multidisciplinary group with the project stakeholders, which will conceive a training/dissemination plan to develop sessions throughout the all archipelago (9 islands).

These sessions, targeting a broad range of the living forces of each island's quadruple helix, aim to disseminate information (existing support mechanisms; good practices; concepts of innovation; entities and facilitators in these processes), as well applying the TIIPING Wheel to the reality of each island. In the case of the TIIPING Wheel, these sessions will follow what is foreseen in the manual, considering the Azores' experience in its application.

The Good Practice "Viking Circle" will be adapted to the discussion methodology of the TIIPING Wheel results. This exercise is intended to be continuous, i.e. these sessions will also train individuals on each of the islands, who will, in turn, continue themselves applying this instrument.

Each session will last an entire workday, divided into three modules:

A) The innovation ecosystem in the Azores

- Presentation of the "Islands of Innovation" project and its concept
- Introduction to business innovation concepts, focusing on the logic of valorisation of endogenous products, especially grounded on the strategic sectors of RIS3 Azores
- Presentation of Good Innovation Practices (from the project; from the Region; from the Island; other examples)
- Presentation of the opportunities and framework for innovation in the Azores 2020 Operational Program
- Presentation of regional and European supporting programs/incentives; territorial cooperation projects; regional supporting and facilitating institutions

B) Application of the Tipping Wheel

- The Tipping Wheel analysis instrument
- The example of the Azores in its application
- Application of the TW (creation of circular groups with discussion of results)

C) Conclusions and Group Discussion

- Debriefing highlighting the most relevant aspects that emerged from the session
- Difficulties identified in accessing programs under Azores 2020 OP
- Inputs and suggestions for the content and governance of the next OP and RIS3
- Suggestions for strengthening the regional innovation ecosystem

Players involved

All stakeholders who have been involved in the project during these 3 years will be invited to join this multidisciplinary team. The stakeholders identified in the project's application form will constitute its core. Each stakeholder will be responsible to find its counterparts in the other islands; contribute, in their area of knowledge, with contents for the preparation of the support materials to be made available on each session.

Objectives

- Replicate the exercises and lessons learned from the project in all the archipelago
- Disseminate and share examples of Good innovation Practices from the region, the project, as well as other international examples
- Identify, with the help of the locals, inspiring examples of innovation in each island (on the logic that sometimes the source of inspiration is closer than you think)
- Disseminate information regarding business aid systems in the area of innovation, be it regional, national or EU instruments
- Strengthen the existing ties between stakeholders and foster new types of collaboration between institutions/people that constitute this multidisciplinary team and the human resources of each island
- Foster the circular vision in the discussion and projection of future community actions
- Identify contact points in the island for future actions of the "Islands of Innovation" project or other actions/activities by other partners involved
- Inspire potential "business innovators"

- Foster discussion and reflection in each island through the perception and awareness of its state of innovation (by applying the TIIPING Wheel);
- Collect input and insights that can be conveyed and incorporated into the various policy reviewing processes: Operational Programme and Smart Specialization Strategy.

Timeframe

This action will take place from 2020 to 2021.

A visit to the 9 islands is foreseen, as well as a final session at the end of the project, in which a summary and evaluation of all these visits will be carried out.

At least two islands are expected to be visited per semester.

Costs

Travel and accommodation of facilitators to each island; support material; rental of meeting venues; catering: approximately € 9,000.00.

Funding source

Azores Regional Budget

Action 3 - Regional Innovation Day/Innovation Show

Background

We believe in leading by example. Defining a specific day in which innovation (in its broader sense) is celebrated, through various initiatives of several entities, can, in a combined manner, create a substantial flow of information and of “spread the word”, with the consequent media and social media appearances, will fast-track the dissemination of information to the community, and create a spotlight that would allow to bring closer to the general public what innovation exists in the Region. This “celebration”, would be developed around some anchor activities, also based on the logic that the dissemination of information can be highly enhanced by using unconventional dissemination channels.

This action takes a clear inspiration, with the necessary adaptations, from the example given by Friesland, with the Good Practice “Kunstmaand Ameland”, which uses unconventional public spaces in the city as an art gallery. The same logic will be used, directed, however, towards innovation, where one aims to disseminate information/projects/“teasers” about innovation, also using unpredictable spaces that benefit from large exposure and movement of people (e.g. public squares, bus stops, etc...).

Action

Definition of a specific day dedicated to Innovation in the archipelago, where various activities, prepared by several actors in the region will be articulated. The anchor activity of this action will be the creation of a sort of “innovation fair” where, as in a normal market, there would be spaces for entities and companies to showcase their work. In this “fair”, there would also be other activities taking place, such as training, especially aimed at a young audience. It is also intended for unconventional spaces to be used (streets, school halls, bus stops) for the dissemination of information.

As this project wants to add and highlight and not to duplicate actions or initiatives, there will be a special attention given to promote association and/or integration with local existing fairs, festivals or activities.

Particular attention will be paid to the dissemination of existing programs and successful approved projects under the AZORES 2020 OP by having in this fair, among others, specific "stands" dedicated to institutional information and of inspiring projects and business approved in this framework. This way, we expect to encourage other actors to build new forms of engaging synergies, and new and better projects. The surrounding activities, that will be integrated in this "Regional Innovation Day", are thought to give a broader sense and consider different aspects of innovation, while special focus on showing the opportunities and good examples of projects approved by the AZORES 2020 OP are foreseen.

Players involved

Regional Directorate for European Affairs, together with other invited entities: institutional stakeholders, business sector, creative and artistic sector

Objectives

- Contribute to the deepening of a culture of innovation in the Region
- Dissemination of information concerning Azores 2020 OP
- Increased awareness of opportunities provided by Azores 2020 OP through inspiring approved projects (good practices)
- Contribute to the growth of more and better projects approved under Azores 2020 OP
- Highlight the economic enhancement of innovation in endogenous products
- Contribute to increasing public acceptance of innovative products
- Disseminate and share examples of Good innovation Practices from the region, the project, as well as other international examples

- Disseminate information regarding business aid systems in the area of innovation, be it regional, national or EU instruments
- Promote exposure of the work done from innovative actors in the region
- Fostering business and academic contacts for future synergies and projects
- Inspire potential "business innovators"

Timeframe

1st quarter of 2021 – Logistics, definition of locations, entities involved and final program of the "Regional Innovation Day"

2nd Semester of 2021 - Execution of the action

Costs

Data not available at this time

Funding source

Azores Regional Budget; budget of the entities involved

Action 4 – Creation of a digital platform

Background

One of the conclusions of this project, confirmed by the stakeholder's, is that there is a lack of meeting points where institutions and individuals can exchange experiences and become aware of what each one of them is doing. It is recognized that this deficiency in the ecosystem leads to the loss of potential synergies, or to activities that overlap. In this sense, one of the lessons learned, immediately after the first regional stakeholders meeting, was the recognition that the meetings organised by this project were one of the few situations in which many actors met and openly shared their experiences. In a discontinued territory like the Azores (9 islands), it is only natural that the immediacy and physical presence are considerably more difficult. Thus, this action is designed precisely to bridge this gap, by resorting to the barrier-free solution that digitization offers.

Action

Creation of a digital platform, fed by the various regional actors, taking advantage of the network created with the project (stakeholders' group and others), which aims to aggregate diverse information that is scattered. In this platform, it will be possible to access a directory of good practices; ongoing projects; events calendar; thematic web streams; information about systems of incentive; statistical information; contacts of entities and projects.

Proximity among innovation actors in the Region, allied with the dissemination of information and awareness to the opportunities of the specific policy instrument targeted at innovation (Azores 2020 OP - Axis 1.2), can increase the likelihood of creating more and better approved projects in this axis and others related to innovation and knowledge transfer of the Azores 2020 Operational Program.

With this goal, despite the various types of thematic information that will be available, there will be specific information on the Azores OP. This information will include the dissemination of practical information (open calls; approved projects; miscellaneous information; news; good practises; space for “vox populi” for improvements on OP; among others), but also a clear focus on the good examples that can inspire, influence and promote new and better projects approved under this policy instrument.

Players involved

Regional Directorate for European Affairs; Regional Fund for Science and Technology; University of the Azores; and other project stakeholders who will be invited to provide content.

Objectives

- Dissemination of information concerning Azores 2020 OP programs;
- Increased awareness of opportunities provided by Azores 2020 OP through inspiring approved projects (good practices);
- Contribute to the growth of more and better projects approved under Azores 2020 OP;
- Disseminate and share examples of Good innovation Practices from the region, the project, as well as other international examples;
- Disseminate information regarding business aid systems in the area of innovation, be it regional, national or EU instruments;
- Promote exposure of the work done by each innovative actor in the region;
- Fostering business and academic contacts for future synergies and projects;
- Inspire potential “business innovators”;
- Promote virtual “meeting points”;
- Contribute to increasing public acceptance for innovative products;

Timeframe

End of 2020: Definition of contributions between the entities involved

First quarter of 2021: Design, logistic, technical and budgetary definition of the platform

End of 2021: Operationalization of the platform

Costs

Data not available at this time

Funding source

Azores Regional Budget



Célia Azevedo

Regional Director for European Affairs

Ponta Delgada, November 28, 2019